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Career Mobility in Criminal Justice: An Exploratory Study of Alaskan Police and Corrections Executives

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Summary

This paper provides exploratory research into the career patterns of Alaska police and correctional executives in order to assess career mobility patterns and the variables which may have had a significant influence on success. Basic data for the paper is from biographical descriptions of 78 people who have served during the past ten years in top executive positions of Alaska's police and correctional agencies, including the commissioner of the Alaska Department of Public Safety, police chiefs of the 25 largest municipal police agencies in Alaska, superintendents of Alaska correctional institutions, and directors and assistant directors within the Alaska Division of Corrections.

CAREER MOBILITY IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE: An
EXPLORATORY STUDY OF ALASKAN
POLICE AND CORRECTIONAL EXECUTIVES*

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INTRODUCTION

The fundamental model for the career systems of most modern organizations is outlined in Max Weber's discussion of the nature and characteristics of bureaucracy (Henderson and Parsons, 1947, 329-340; Girth and Mills, 1958, 196-244). Bureaucratic organization was viewed by Weber as "technically superior" to other forms of organization primarily because of its rational position structure and reliance on "career" employees.

Bureaucratic Career Model.

The foundation of bureaucratic organization is a structure of hierarchically arranged, specialized positions. These positions are arranged by two basic dimensions: (1) The supervisory authority of each position; and (2) The knowledge and skill required for the performance of the responsibilities of each position. Bottom or entry-level positions are theoretically invested with the least authority and the lowest intellectual and skill requirements. The authority and responsibility of positions above the bottom-level are increased in proportion to the nearness of a position to the top of the organizational hierarchy.

This arrangement of positions provides the basis for both organizational relations and personnel development. Girth and Mills (1958, 203-204) translated Weber's description of how the arrangement operates as a career system:

The official is set for a "career" within the hierarchical order of the public service. He moves from the lower, less important, and lower paid to the higher positions. The average official naturally desires a mechanical fixing of conditions of promotion; if not of the offices, at least of the salary levels. He wants these conditions fixed in terms

of "seniority" or possibly according to grades achieved in a developed system of expert examinations. Here and there, such examinations actually form a character indelebilis of the official and have lifelong effects on his career. To this is joined the desire to qualify the right to office and the increasing tendency towards status group closure and economic security. All of this makes for a tendency to consider the offices as "prebends" of those who are qualified by educational certificates.

The essence of this bureaucratic career system model, therefore, involves new employees qualifying for bottom, entry-level positions; accruing job experience, skills and knowledge; receiving promotion to successively higher positions on the basis of an impartial determination of competence which is superior to their peers in equal positions; and finishing their careers in positions of authority - with the most highly competent in executive positions at the apex of the organizational hierarchies.

Police and Corrections Career System Model.

Most management materials in the police and corrections field contain descriptive and prescriptive proclamations consistent with, and supportive of the bureaucratic model (see Wilson and McLaren, 1972; Bopp, 1976; Allen and Simonsen, 1975). Positions in police and correctional agencies are formally presented as well-defined and arranged by level of authority in a hierarchical fashion. People who qualify for employment in entry-level positions soon learn the formal procedural requirements for promotion to more responsible supervisory and management positions of the organization employing them.

Training and personnel development programs for police and corrections agencies are based on assumptions about the accuracy of the bureaucratic definitions of the structure and operation of career systems of these agencies. Programs are designed to

prepare people both for specific jobs and promotion within the organizations.

Most people interested in criminal justice management share an impression that the formal bureaucratic descriptions of police and corrections career ladders and promotional procedures are accurate. They also, in general, believe that the "best" method of attaining a top-level executive position in a police or correctional organization entails entry into a bottom-level position and systematic in qualification for promotion up the formally defined career ladder of the organization.

Career System Research.

Studies have been conducted of the career mobility patterns of people who have been successful in attaining executive positions in private and public organizations outside the criminal justice field. (Mills, 1945; Warner and Abegglin, 1963; Jennings, 1967 and 1971; Sturdivant and Adler, 1976). This research provides evidence that people who successfully achieve executive positions often do not follow the formal career ladders of their organizations, and the career routes which most frequently produce executives do not operate as presented in bureaucratic theory. Although the actual mobility patterns of successful executives are not widely understood, these patterns seem to be systematic in nature and operation (Jennings, 1971). Several authorities have used the findings in efforts to improve organizations and enhance the success potential of ambitious managers (Jennings, 1971; Levinson, 1970; Tamarkin, 1972).

The research into the actual operation of career systems of

police and correctional organizations is limited.¹ Most of the literature contains purely normative information about the "goodness" of the bureaucratic career system model.²

The traditional bureaucratic description of career systems seems to have had such a substantial influence on the thinking of people in the justice field that those who detect inconsistencies between the model career system and the actual career system operation tend to attack the "badness" of the inconsistency rather than specify or explain the actual operation of the system. They usually advocate a greater insulation of career systems from "politics" and changes in procedures to conform to the bureaucratic career system model (Police Executive Committee, 1976). This approach fails to provide information about the actual operation of justice career systems; it fails to reveal options for evaluating the productivity or assessing the relative effectiveness of career system variations; and it leaves the normative, bureaucratic postulates open for challenge. There is a pressing need for factual information about career systems in criminal justice agencies.

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

This paper provides exploratory research into the career

¹ Previous research efforts include a study of correctional executives (Nelson and Lovell, 1969) and two studies (Wilson, 1973; Police Executive Committee of IACP, 1976). These studies provide substantive data about factors which bear on career mobility in the police field. They do not, however, deal directly with definitions of the mobility patterns themselves.

² The nature of and commitment to this normative position can be seen in the first national report of the problems of police (Wickersham Commission, 1931) and a recently completed national study on police executives (Police Chief Executive Committee, 1976).

patterns of Alaska police and correctional executives. The purpose of the research is to assess the career mobility patterns of people who have successfully attained these executive positions to determine both the nature of the patterns and the variables which may have had a significant influence on the success of the executives.

Basic data for the paper is from biographical descriptions on 78 people who have served during the past ten years in top executive positions of Alaska's police and correctional agencies. The agencies and positions studied include:

- (1) Alaska Department of Public Safety (State Police - Commissioner;)
- (2) 25 largest municipal police organizations - police chiefs;
- (3) Alaska correctional institutions - Superintendents; and
- (4) Alaska Division of Corrections - Directors and Assistant Directors.

This population provides a relatively complete list of the police and correction executives who have served in Alaska during the decade, and on whom background data which could be collected with the limited resources available for the study is available.

The background data of the executives was obtained from an evaluation of a combination of both public records and resumes supplied by the executives themselves. Additional subjective data was obtained from ten formal interviews of executives and appointing officials. These interviews solicited information about factors which effected the decisions of appointing officials.

The confidence placed in the findings and conclusions should be conditioned by a recognition of the limited nature of the research methods and the data. The primary value of the project,

as with most exploratory studies, may lie in the possibilities for further research which it helps to identify.

FORMAL ALASKAN JUSTICE CAREER SYSTEMS

The police and correctional organizations in Alaska are, in general, internally structured in a fashion similar to agencies in other parts of the United States. There are, however, specific features of agency structures which make police and correctional agencies in Alaska unique. Less than 20 years ago Alaska was a U.S. Territory with the federal government providing nearly all justice services. The state has a land area approximately one-fifth the size of the entire continental United States with vast amounts of wilderness and few roads. The total population of the state is estimated at less than 450,000. About one-half of these people live in its largest city, Anchorage.

Police and Correctional Organization.

The agencies of criminal justice in Alaska - due to the size of the State, youth of the agencies, and opportunity for premediated design at statehood - are in many ways more rational, bureaucratic structures than similar agencies which have a longer history of incremental evolution. They are fewer in number and more highly centralized than elsewhere in the country.

The Department of Public Safety is the State's primary police operation. It provides - through divisions of Fish and Wildlife and State Troopers - policing and law enforcement services for 98% of the land area and approximately 50% of the citizens in the State.

Alaska has no organizations equivalent to county sheriffs. Policing is provided either by the Alaska Department of Public Safety or local police. Alaska State Troopers have approximately 380 sworn personnel with general peace officer powers distributed throughout the State. The Division has confined its activities to areas outside the jurisdictional boundaries of local police agencies except when a local police agency requests assistance.

Local police operations range in size from part-time officers periodically serving a village to the Anchorage Police Department with 214 employees. There are approximately 30 permanently established departments with full-time personnel with a total of approximately 800 state and local sworn police officers in the State.

The newest police agency in the State is the North Slope Borough Department of Public Safety which was formally established in 1976. This organization has 20 employees who are responsible for providing fire, police and emergency medical services to about 6,000 citizens in eight remote villages and towns in the North Slope Borough. This Borough lies entirely north of the Arctic Circle and has a land area slightly larger than the combined total in Washington, Oregon, and California. Its villages are as much as 600 miles apart and usually accessible only by aircraft.

Alaska correctional operations are under a Division of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. This Division of Corrections provides - directly or by contract with local units of government - all formal governmental correctional services - including local jails - in the state. It provides eight major

correctional institutions staffed by approximately 400 employees at regional locations throughout Alaska.

The entire Alaska criminal justice system - including legal operations - employs only approximately 2,500 people. It has a yearly personnel turnover rate of about 22 percent. Recent estimates are that the system will employ an average of 273 new people each year until the start of the 21st Century (Angell, 1978).

Career System Structure.

The position classification schemes and requirements for entry in the Alaska justice positions reflect a commitment to retaining competent people in police and corrections positions. All correctional positions above entry level including executive positions are well defined and have college education prerequisites. Approximately one-quarter of the local police agencies require successful completion of some college education to qualify for their police chief positions. Although higher education is not required for appointment to the top executive position in the Alaska Department of Public Safety - Commissioner, several of the positions immediately subordinate to the Commissioner have college degree prerequisites. Generally, however, educational requirements can be waived for a candidate who has criminal justice experience judged to be approximately equivalent to the required higher education.

All of the agencies have formally defined structures and procedures for employee promotion from entry to executive positions. On the surface these career ladders seem to facilitate - if not mandate - the internal development and promotion of employees to the executive positions.

The impression conveyed by the organizational descriptions of

these formal career systems is that people entering the organizations can expect to be objectively evaluated on their job performance and knowledge, and promoted as they demonstrate competency and openings occur at positions on the career ladder above them. Due to the small size of most of the agencies, the distance from the bottom, entry-level position to the top executive position requires only three or four moves up the ladder.

If the systems work as it formally presented, most intelligent and industrious people who join a police or correctional agency in the state should be able to attain an executive position during their twenty to thirty year career. If the actual operation of the career systems follow the formal descriptions, the mobility patterns of the executives should reveal an orderly progression of people from entry to executive positions in each organization.

EXECUTIVE CAREER PATTERNS

The initial focus of this project was on identifying and assessing the career movements of the successful police and correctional executives from their initial position in a criminal justice agency until they arrived in an executive position. A summary career mobility profile reflecting position to position, movement was prepared on each executive. The profiles of all people who had served as chief executives in the same organization combined to develop a composite organizational executive career profile. These profiles were compared with each other and the formal career system descriptions of each organization.

The actual career movement profiles of executives were notably inconsistent with the formal career system structures of the organizations in approximately 75 percent of the cases. The career profiles of executives who served in the (1) Alaska Department of Public Safety, (2) middle-size city police departments, and (4) Alaska's Division of Corrections executives usually were not consistent with the formal career ladders of these agencies. The agencies that most closely followed their own bureaucratic career systems in promoting people to executive positions were (1) large city police organizations and (2) correctional institutions.

The career mobility patterns of people who have served in the same executive positions tended to be markedly similar and consistent with the composite executive career profile for the organization in which they served. In other words, although the procurement patterns varied from organization to organization, the career mobility patterns of the executives - when controlled by a specific organization - were sufficiently similar to cause suspicion about an underlying logic to the selection process which is applied to the selection of all executives.

Neither the executive career profiles of agencies nor the career mobility patterns of executives were simplistic. Both normally involved a complex mix of internal promotions and lateral - organization to organization - transfer as executives had moved from entry-level positions to executive positions.

Procurement Pattern Typologies

The organizations' executive career profiles follow three general patterns or typologies. These typologies were identified as: (1) Multi-agency Path; (2) Inside Path; and (3) Lateral Transfer Path.

Multi-Agency Path. The Multi-Agency Path is the most common executive career system of police and correctional agencies in Alaska. This system is associated with (1) the position of Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Public Safety, (2) Director and Assistant Director positions of Alaska Division of Corrections, and (3) chief of police positions in small and middle-size police departments.

The specific stepping stone positions in the multi-agency path differ from agency to agency; however, they are essentially the same for each people who moved to the same executive position. The path to the Alaska Department of Public Safety Commissioner position provides an appropriate illustration.

The Department had four commissioners whose career patterns were studied. Three of these people entered the police field in Alaska as a police officer on an Alaska municipal police organization. The fourth first entered the police field as an Alaska State Trooper in the Department of Public Safety. Within four years of entry into the police field all four people served as an entry-level State Trooper. All were promoted within the trooper organization to supervisory level positions of sergeant, and then to management positions of lieutenant and, in some instances, captain. Promotions to the highest rank achieved in Alaska State Troopers required period of 6 to 12 years.

Upon reaching management positions, prior to eligibility for normal statement, each of the people resigned from the Department of Public Safety and assumed a responsible position in an organization outside of State government.⁴ After approximately three years

⁴ Two of the four served as the Juneau police chief, a position highly visible to the appointing official, during the interim period. One headed a private investigation business and one became a commercial pilot.

outside of state government, the people received appointment by the Governor to the position of Department of Public Safety Commissioner.

The composite executive career profile to the position of Commissioner of Public Safety is as follows:

- (1) Entry as a municipal police officer in a local mid-size or large Alaska police agency. Serve 1 to 3 years.
- (2) Enter Alaska State Trooper Division as a sworn trooper and advance up the career system to at least lieutenant. Serve 6 to 12 years.
- (3) Leave the Troopers and serve in a responsible position in a non-state governmental law enforcement related position or a private company. Most common position is the police chief in Juneau. Serve 2 to 6 years.
- (4) Return to the Department of Public Safety and the Commissioner position.

The multi-agency path typology normally includes several organization-to-organization changes starting early in executives' careers while they were in low-level positions in organization hierarchies. In many instances an executive who followed a multi-agency path served in the same organization on two or more separate occasions in the course of his career. The multi-agency path involves a ratio of one move laterally from organization-to-organization for each two moves vertically upward in hierarchial authority.

Inside Path. The Inside Path Typology is the second most common route to criminal justice executive positions in Alaska. This executive career profile is most frequently associated with larger, highly routinized organizations such as the large city police agencies and correctional institutions.

The Inside Path is similar to--but not the same as--the sequence of ranks which are formally established as the "career ladder" of an organization (i.e, sergeant, lieutenant, captain). As previously

explained, these formal career ladders define the advancement procedure as a systematic, upward process from patrol officer, to sergeant, to lieutenant, to captain, etc., to the executive position of an organization. The Inside Path is more complex than a simple system of rank-to-higher rank promotions. The Inside Paths are made up of positions--as opposed to ranks--people must occupy on their way to the top executive position.

An example of the Inside Path of one Alaska police organization involves movement in the following sequence:

- (1) Serve in uniformed patrol for minimum time of 6 months to 2 years.
- (2) Move to positions of the same rank in investigation and vice operations.
- (3) Win formal promotion to sergeant in planning, personnel, or training.
- (4) Serve as assistant to the chief.

Inside Paths in Alaska corrections involve several geographic moves laterally for each vertical promotion in rank.

Movement along an Inside Path is dependent upon more than one's mere presence in a rank or position--an issue we will consider in a later part of this paper.

Lateral Transfer Path. The Lateral Transfer Path Typology is the executive career least frequently utilized by police and correctional executives. The Lateral Transfer Path entails a person winning promotions or achieving success in one agency and then receiving appointment at an equivalent level of responsibility in a police or correctional organization.

Agencies which rely on the Lateral Transfer Path tend to procure their chief executives from positions of comparable status

and equivalent rank in other organizations. The agencies relying on this type of executive development path tend to be the smaller police agencies with high turnover rates. They tend to draw their executives from the same counterpart positions time after time. For example, one municipal police agency consistently fills openings in its Chief position from among the managers of the Alaska State Troopers. A second smaller agency consistently draws its chiefs from non-police managers of state agencies.

Rationale of Procurement Path Use. The differences between the organizational "career ladders" and the career paths actually followed to executive positions were discussed with several of the officials who have been responsible for appointing a criminal justice executive. They readily acknowledged the tendency to deviate from the formal career ladder of their organization in selecting and hiring a police or corrections executive. In most instances it was apparent that the person selected for the executive position was picked because of a feeling by the appointing official (or a person of influence closely associated with the official) that the background possessed by the candidate was the best preparation for the position. This fact may be used to explain why the executive career paths tend to be similar for the people selected over a period of time for the same position.

Although police and correctional executives tend to be selected by appointing officials in ways consistent with one of the preceding three typologies, decision makers have periodically changed their executive procurement strategy. Such changes are usually the result of a particularly bad experience with a specific justice executive.

One city official provided an illustration of the typical stimulation for changing the executive selection pattern on which he had previously relied, "I used to insist on filling the police chief position with someone inside the department, but the last guy was such a turkey. From now on until we get better (police) employees, I'm going to hire people with police management experience in some other department."

Officials interviewed, for the most part, expressed a belief that it would be best to rely on the formal career ladder of an agency. Such a practice, they reasoned, would facilitate good employee morale and management-employee relations. At the same time, they felt justified in ignoring the career system and going outside their organizations to obtain people who they believed to be more competent and capable executives than were available within the agency. Logical reasons were presented for each deviation from the formal career ladder.

One fact discovered which deserves mention was that none of the appointing officials seemed to have decided to ignore the formal career ladder applicants or hire the career path because of partisan political pressures or considerations. Each official interviewed seemed to have honestly been concerned about selecting a competent person for the top executive for the agency. The general attitude of appointing officials is perhaps best expressed in the statement of one elected official who explained, "That police operation is the most potentially damaging operation under my direction, and I do my level best to ensure myself that its chief is the most trustworthy and competent person I can get to handle the job."

FACTORS INFLUENCING EXECUTIVE MOBILITY AND SUCCESS

The executives studied are different from other citizens and most of the people who enter the criminal justice field - if for no other reason than they made it to the top of a justice organization while others did not. The career mobility patterns of the individual executives, although consistent with the preceeding mobility models, frequently varied from specific norms of the models. Some executives achieved executive status rapidly while others spent many years reaching the top; some made a tremendously high number of lateral transfers; some moved geographically more often than others; some consistently held long tenure in positions they entered.

Many of the differences seem to be unrelated to the career paths themselves. The differences may be related to background characteristics of the individual executives.

Several scholars who have explored career mobility in other types of agencies have found background characteristics of the executives to be significant in influencing the career patterns of successful executives (Warner and Abegglen, 1963; Jennings, 1967 and 1970; Miller, 1952). The only comprehensive background information available on executives considered in this study were related to educational achievement, length of experience in criminal justice operations, and job tenure length. These factors were evaluated as a second phase of this study.

Education

The educational achievement of Alaskan police and correctional executives provides an interesting mosaic (See Table 1). Correc-

COMPARISONS OF HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

College Grad

P.E.

P.O.

Corrections Executives

Correctional Officers

Public

Some College

Police Executives

Police Officers

State Police Executives

Corr. Exec.

Corr. Off.

Public

High School

Police Executives

Police Officers

State Police Executives

Corr. Exec.

Corr. Off.

Public

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

Percentage

Police Executives
Police Officers
Corrections Executives
Correctional Officers
Public

Table 1

tional executives studied had, on-the-whole, considerably higher educational levels than police executives. Forty-six percent of the correctional executives, 8 percent of the local police executives and none of the state-level police chief executives had earned at least a baccalaureate degree. Only thirty-one percent of the correctional executives, 50 percent of the state police executives, and 52 percent of the local police chiefs had not attended formal college courses. All of these groups have higher overall educational achievement than the general public.⁵

Although correctional executives as a group had more formal education than the general population and a higher proportion of college graduates than any other group of executives, they had completed less education than their subordinates. This situation may be due to the fact that the correctional executives were chosen from an entire 10 year period whereas the correctional officers considered were all currently employed officers. If the educational level of officers from the entire period had been considered the results may have been different.

Correctional executives who were appointed to top positions in the first few years of the period studied had more college education than those who were appointed in more recent years. Institutional executives, as a group, have a higher educational level than top-level, state correctional executives. Both of these situations seem related to a recent trend at the state level

5

The business community provides a sharp contrast to the justice field. Sturdivant and Adler reported in a recent issue of the Harvard Business Review (1976: 130) that 96 percent of the American business executives have been to college, nearly half have done some graduate work, and 43 percent have graduate degrees.

to cut escapes by appointing security-minded people with police sub-system experience to the top positions in corrections.

In the police sub-system, a higher proportion of both police officers and executives have completed high school and some college than have citizens. However, a larger portion of the general public than police officers or executives are college graduates. This situation probably reflects the recent prioritization of college education for active police officers.

The Alaska Department of Public Safety is the largest police organization in Alaska. Its Commissioners have had more experience and less education than executives in other agencies studied. The same is true of the large city police executives. This situation may be a function of the long experience which must be accumulated by people entering these positions.

Executives who entered the police and corrections field after completing a substantial amount of higher education or a degree, attained executive status at a younger age than those who had no college education prior to entering the justice field. Their advancement to an executive position was more rapid than the advancement of people without prior college (See Table 2). Higher education does seem to have been related to the speed of mobility of most other justice executives.

Experience

The average length of experience in the criminal justice field prior to appointment as an Alaskan police or correctional executive is summarized in Table 3. Statistical data on the

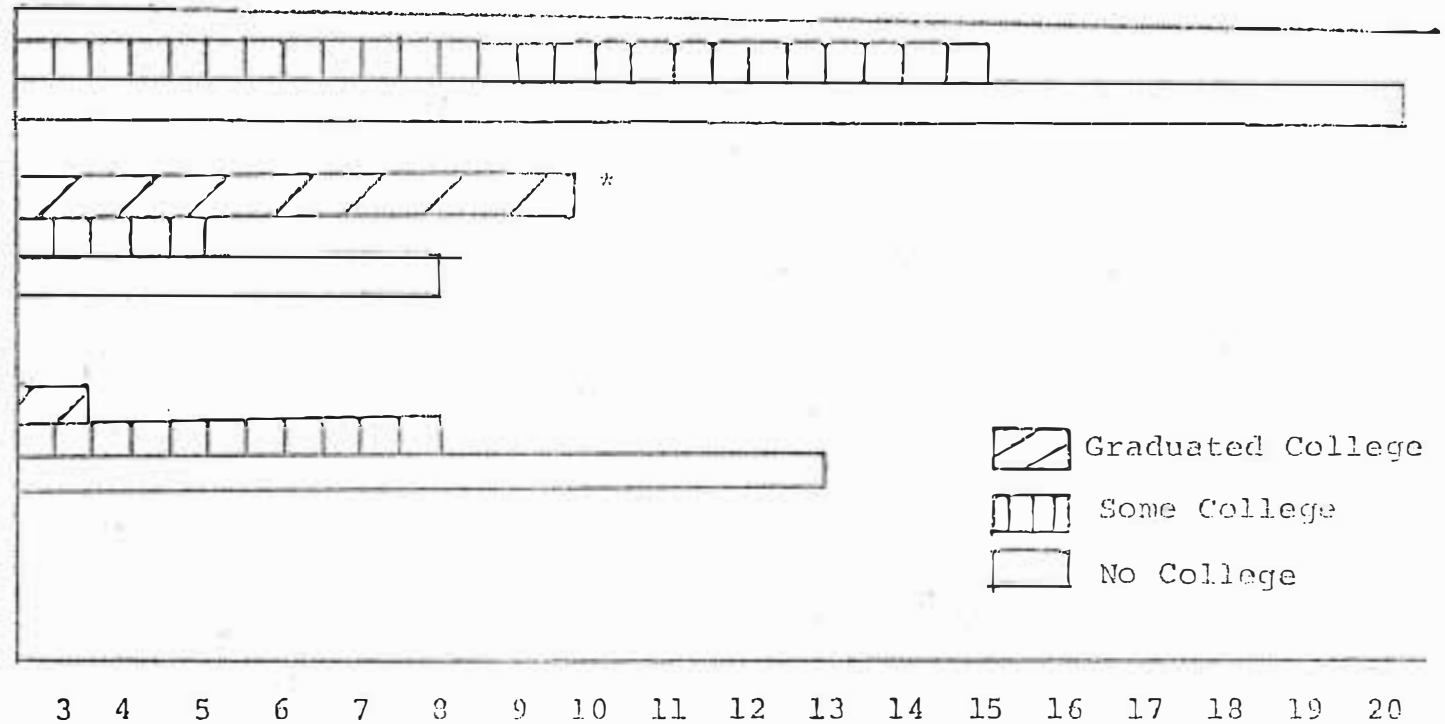
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND EXPERIENCE
WHEN APPOINTED TO EXECUTIVE POSITION

CATEGORY
OF
EXECUTIVE

State Police

Corrections
Executives

Local Police
Executives



Years experience before executive appointment

*This item was affected by the executives with police experience who did not possess college degrees.

TABLE 2

JUSTICE EXPERIENCE PRIOR TO APPOINTMENT
TO EXECUTIVE POSITION

EXECUTIVE POSITION	AVERAGE YEARS OF PRIOR JUSTICE EXPERIENCE	
	Alaska	*United States
Director/Assist. Director Corrections	17	Not Available
Correctional Superintendent	7	Not Available
Commissioner (State Police)	17	21.2
Chief Large Police (Pop. 30,000+)	19	18
Chief Mid-Size Police (Pop. 5,000-30,000)	13	13.6
Chief Small Police (Pop. less than 5,000)	10	7.5
All Police Executives	12	13.3

*Source: Police Chief Executive Committee, 1976:28.

Table 3

average length of the justice experience for correctional executives who serve outside the State of Alaska could not be obtained; however, the prior experience in justice agencies of outside police executives was available for comparison purposes.

The prior experience of police executives in Alaska and in the United States as a whole is not substantially different. The average years of prior justice experience for Alaska police chiefs is 12 years as compared to 13.3 years for their counterparts throughout the United States. Commissioners of the Alaska Department of Public Safety (State Police) have had approximately 4.2 years less experience than their counterparts throughout the nation; and chiefs of police in small cities of Alaska have had approximately 2.5 years more justice experience than chiefs in comparable cities elsewhere.

All of the Alaska executives studied had some experience in the justice field prior to being appointed to an executive position. Exception for executives of large city police departments and correctional institutions, Alaska police and correctional executives usually did not receive their experience in the organization where they were appointed to an executive position. All of the Commissioners of public safety had experience outside the Alaska State Trooper organization; nearly all of the people who served as chiefs in small and mid-size city police agencies had justice experience outside of the organization where they were appointed chief; and well over one-half of the directors and assistant directors of corrections had experience outside of the Alaska correctional agencies.

The average length of experience in their career field prior

to receiving an executive appointment is two years less for all correctional executives (10 years) than for all police executives (12 years). The average correctional executive is over ten times as likely to have had police experience as the average police executive is to have had correctional experience (See Table 4). Forty-six percent of the corrections executives have had police experience as compared to approximately three percent of the police executives who have had correctional experience.

Actually only two police executives had correctional experience whereas six out of the thirteen correctional officials studied had sworn police officers. One-half of the people who have been hired directly into top level correctional executive positions in recent years have served as police officers in the past.

A substantial number of both police and correctional executives have had criminal justice experience outside of Alaska. Forty-five percent of the police and 23 percent of corrections served in police and/or correctional positions outside the State of Alaska. A majority of the police chiefs in small cities in the state have outside police experience. In corrections, the State-level executives are nearly three times as likely to have outside experience and twice as likely to have had police experience as are the superintendents of local institutions.

Tenure

In contrast to the similarities in length of experiential backgrounds of the police executives in Alaska to the average American police executive, the tenure of Alaskan police executives

PROPORTION OF CJ EXECUTIVES WITH
BOTH CORRECTION AND POLICE EXPERIENCE

CATEGORY OF
EXECUTIVE

Institutional
Corrections

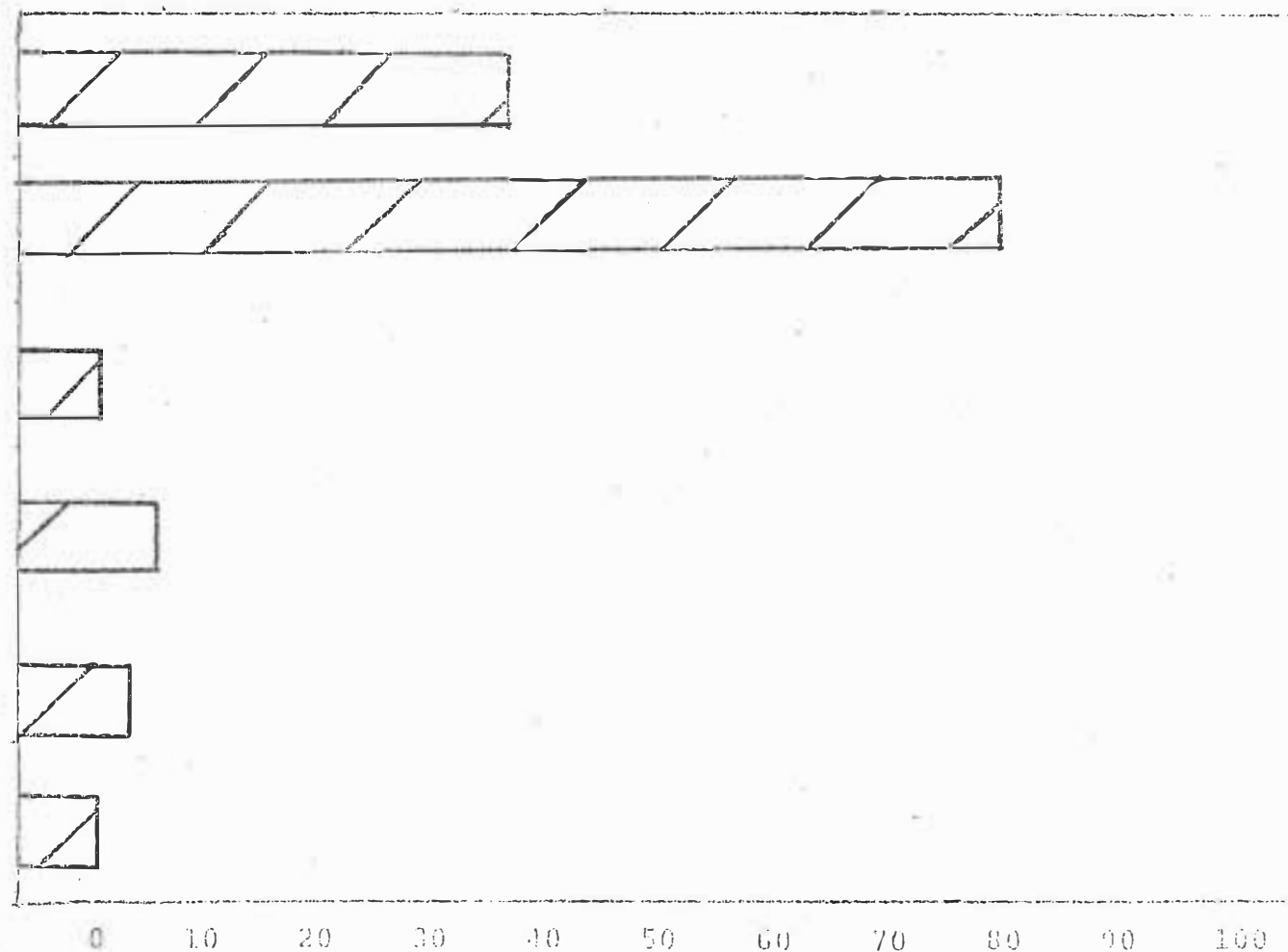
State Corrections

Large City Police
(over 30,000 pop.)

Mid-size Police
(5,000-30,000)

Small Cities Police
(Less than 5,000)

State Police*



Percentage of Total Executives Hired

TABLE 4

is shorter than that of the average for the United States (See Table 5). Since the national study of police chief executives was based on responses from executives who are still in office and over one-half of the officials surveyed in Alaska have served their complete term of tenure, it is likely that the tenure of an Alaskan police executive is considerably shorter than the average American chief. Correctional executives and police executives in the State have the same average tenure of four years.

Executives in organizations that tend to fill their executive positions with people from outside the organization have a shorter average tenure than executives in agencies that use their own employees for executive positions (See Table 6). The average tenure of Commissioners, Directors and Assistant Directors of Corrections, and chiefs of police in small cities was three years or less. From 40 to 100% of the people for these positions were hired from outside the organization. Large city police chiefs and superintendents of corrections usually are promoted from within their organizations and have tenure of 5 to 8 years.

MOBILITY THROUGH CAREER PATHS

The formal career ladders of most of the agencies which came under scrutiny during this study were short with only three or four positions or ranks between the bottom and the top. The executive career paths of the people studied, on the other hand, involved substantially more positions. After comparing the number of positions in the two career systems, one might reasonably assume that the formal career ladders would facilitate the most

LENGTH OF TENURE IN JUSTICE

EXECUTIVE POSITION

EXECUTIVE POSITION	AVERAGE YEARS OF TENURE	
	ALASKA	UNITED STATES*
Director/Assistant Director Corrections	2.5	not available
Corrections Superintendent	5	not available
Commissioner (State Police)	3	4
Chief Large Police (Pop. 30,000+)	8	5.9
Chief Mid-size Police (Pop. 5,000 - 30,000)	5	6
Chief Small Police (Pop. less than 5,000)	3	5.6
Average Police Chief	4	5.7

* Source: Police Chief Executive Committee, 1976:28

TABLE 5

COMPARISON OF LATERAL ENTRY PRACTICES AND TENURE LENGTH

EXECUTIVE POSITION	% LATERAL ENTRY	AVERAGE YEARS OF TENURE
Director/Assist. Director Corrections	40	2.5
Superintendent Corrections	0	5
Commissioner	100	3
Chief Large City	17	8
Chief Mid-Size City	71	5
Chief Small City	83%	3

TABLE 6

rapid progression to an executive position.

A more careful assessment of the case at hand again confirms the axiom that the apparent is not always the reality. The circuitous routes of the executive career paths are more likely--if past executive experience is a reflection of the future--to provide the most expeditious advancement to the top executive position in most Alaska police and correctional organizations.

Mobility Characteristics.

The mobility opportunities are not the same for the agencies (Table 7). Some organizations, such as the Department of Public Safety and most small and mid-size city police departments, a person using the inside career ladder will find the top executive position filled by outsiders four times out of every five openings. This means that insiders are usually on blocked ladders--the executive openings may occur on their career ladder-but they won't be able to get to it.

The odds are considerably better for successful progression by an insider up the career ladders of correctional agencies. Six out of every ten executive positions at the director and assistant director level are filled by promotion from within the organization, and all of the institutional superintendents studied were insiders. The correctional organization is, however, the only correctional operation in the State.

Institutional correctional executives in Alaska have moved one time geographically for every two position moves. Every executive in corrections who has advanced inside the organization has moved geographically in the course of a career. There is little possibility of attaining an executive position in the Division

PROPORTION EXECUTIVES ENTERING
FROM POSITION OUTSIDE HIRING AGENCY

CATEGORY OF
EXECUTIVE

Institutional
Corrections

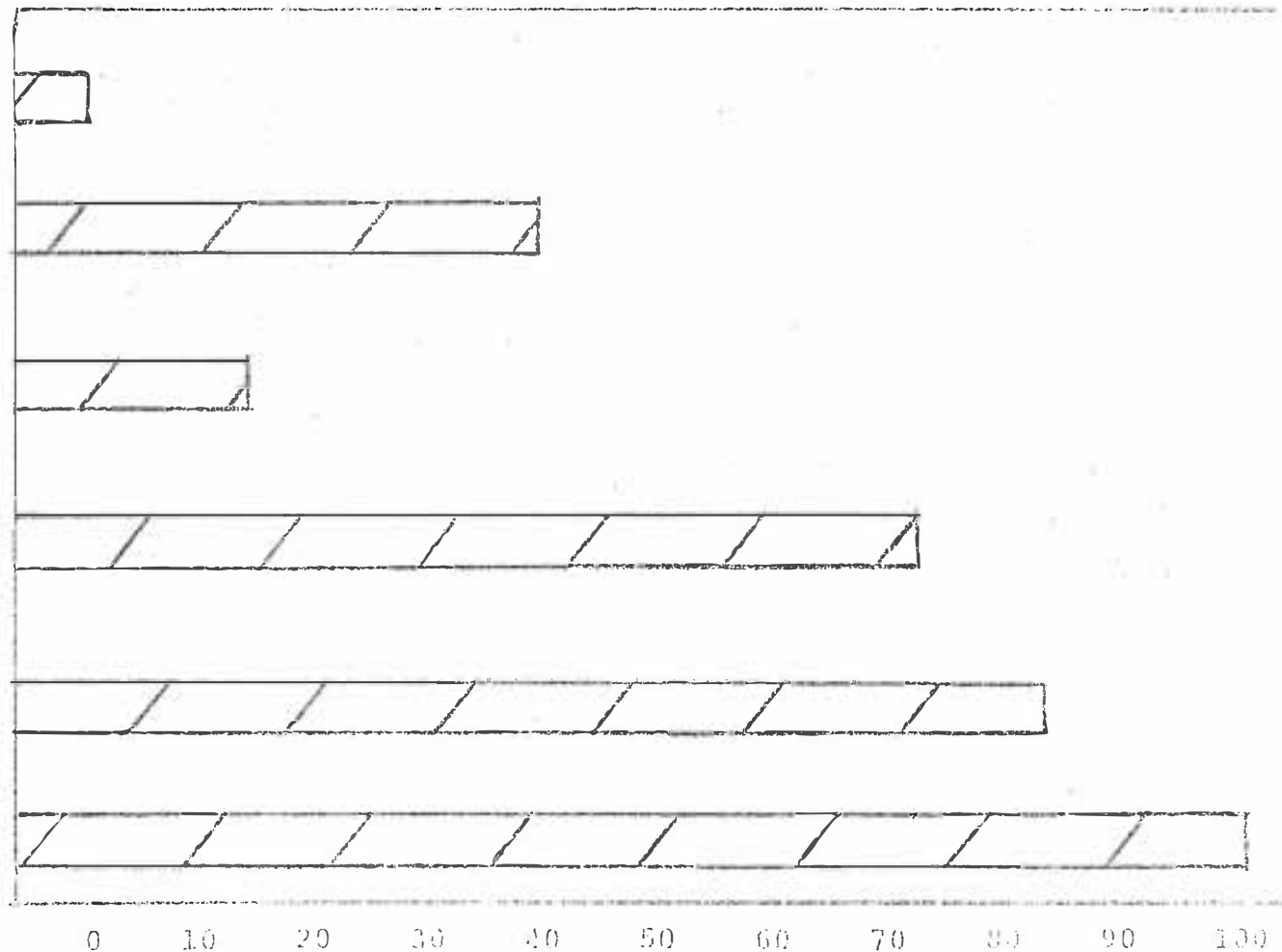
State Corrections

Large City Police
(over 30,000 pop.)

Mid-size Police
(5,00-30,000)

Small Cities Police
(Less than 5,000)

State Police*



Percentage of Total Executives Hired

TABLE 7

of Corrections without accepting geographic mobility--in spite of the Inside Paths to the top.

Large city police departments--of which there are two in the State--seem to have career routes that are (except for geographic transfers) similar to corrections. As previously indicated, the executive career paths of large city police departments are not strictly consistent with the formal career ladders of the organizations; they fall within the category of Inside Path.

These police agencies do not have geographically separated divisions such as corrections, but they do have a variety of specialized sub-divisions. The average large city police executive studied did not go straight up the organization's career ladder, but rather moved horizontally into different positions of similar rank within the organization twice for every one promotional or vertical move up the career ladder.

The agency to agency pattern which most police executives of mid-size and small cities followed took them into an average of slightly over three separate agencies over a 12 year period before they arrived at their first executive position. They have moved three times geographically for every four vertical position moves upward and every two horizontal moves between specialty positions of the police field. With only a few conspicuous exceptions, police executives' career patterns have been confined to the police sub-system of the criminal justice system. As previously mentioned, only two (approximately 3%) of the police executives had served time in correctional agencies.

Correctional executives, particularly those in director and

assistant director positions at the state level, however, have police experience. Eighty percent of the state-level directors and assistant directors and 37% of the local institutional superintendents had police experience during the course of their careers. Police experience among correctional executives has been increasing with time. This mobility from the police sub-system may well be a most significant prerequisite to upward career mobility in corrections in the future.

The high mobility from the police to correctional sub-systems may contribute to an understanding of the recent efforts by Alaska's correctional executives to move the Division of Corrections from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services to the Department of Public Safety where it would be a counterpart to the Alaska State Troopers.

As noted in the previous section, the organizations that rely most heavily on other organizations for the procurement of executives provide proportionally shorter average tenure for their executives. It is difficult to assess, without additional information, the reason for this situation. The IACP Police Chief Executive Committee was quick to conclude such short tenure was proof of political removal of police chiefs (Police Chief Executive Committee, 1976). Our data can be used to support at least two alternative conclusions: (1) Those who leave do so to move to equal or greater responsibility and pay in other police agencies, and (2) a substantial number of the people who leave receive retirement which is due them as a result of both previous experience and their experience in the position.

Critical Factors

No matter what type of executive position one strives for in the criminal justice field, progression to an executive position seems to require several years of experience in the agencies of the sub-system (but not necessarily the organization) wherein the executive position is located. The acceptable methods for earning countable experience points vary from organization to organization and seem to be related to the type of biases and preferences on which the appointing officials rely in procuring themselves. Regardless of the agency involved it is unlikely that a person will attain an executive position in any justice organization with less than ten years experience, and in the larger, more routinized agencies, one who arrives in an executive position in 15 years or less can claim unusually rapid success in achieving executive status.

Several other factors seemed to be present where the mobility of executives to the top position was fast. The most obvious of these factors, as previously mentioned, was higher education. Even though the proportion of executives in the police sub-system who entered the field with a college degree was small, these people took an average of only three years to attain an executive position (Table 2, page 20). Excepting for college graduates among the correctional executives, people with higher education but not degrees also attained their first executive position with considerably less experience than those without any background of higher learning. The time required to obtain the college education was less than the experience time reduction.

Another factor which seems to be related to speed of upward career mobility is the length of time in entry-level positions. Executives as a whole spend an average of two years in an entry level position. Those who spend longer than two years in an entry-position took disproportionately and substantially longer to get to the top executive position.

A most interesting factor in the history of rapidly upward mobile executives studied is the extent and nature of the contact of a potential executive with the person with appointing power prior to the appointment. It seems that where the official with appointing power has an opportunity to observe firsthand the successful performance of a person, the probability of an executive appointment for the person is increased.

There are several illustrations of this situation in the data collected. For example, the governor is the appointing official for both the positions of Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety and Director of Corrections. A majority of the people who have been appointed to these respective positions had served in management positions in Juneau--where they were highly visible to the governor--shortly preceeding or at the time of appointment.

Similar situations seem to have been present preceeding the appointment of several local police chiefs and superintendents of corrections. Therefore, it seems that the probability of appointment to an executive position is increased if the appointing official has viewed the work of a candidate and developed confidence in the candidate's integrity, ability and capabilities.

Further, it seems very clear, based on the discussions with people involved in the system, that the concept of trust plays an important role in determining whether a person who is otherwise acceptable will be awarded an executive position. People who are not trusted by appointing officials simply are not awarded executive status, regardless of their qualifications.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This exploratory research has provided evidence of a lack of consistency between the ideal type bureaucratic career ladder model and the actual career patterns of people who have been successful in attaining executive positions in Alaska police and correctional organizations. People who have been getting to the top positions largely by-pass the formal career ladder. Significant values and biases on the part of the appointing official and significant associates of the appointing official influence and shape the actual career path which will get one into the executive office.

Informal careers paths are not randomly attached to the executive office with each new executive selected, they seem to be stable patterns through the selection of several different executives. Most of the people for an executive slot in a specific agency have transversed similar career paths.

The career paths followed by most executives have been longer in terms of total number of moves from position to position than are the career ladders of the organizations in which the executives served. On the other hand, these longer paths provided more

expedient routes to the top executive positions than did formal internal career ladders. The fact that the informal paths take potential executives through several different agencies may result in the career paths being more developmental in nature than the internal career ladders of each agency. The growth of the Alaska criminal justice system may have been too rapid for the development of people inside police and correctional agencies. The career mobility of the people who were selected as executives may have provided them with experiential learning critical to their development of competency.

This procedure may also have assisted appointing officials by providing them with candidates who have actually handled positions of responsibility equivalent to that which they would have to handle in the new position. This experience--in some instances--seems to have afforded appointing officials an opportunity to observe and develop relationships of confidence and trust in candidates.

Several factors seem to have influenced the speed with which people progressed to the executive positions in the criminal justice agencies. The most conspicuous among these seem to have been experience, education, persistence, willingness to accept position changes, and relationship to appointing authorities. Experience seems to be an essential factor, but the required length of experience is influenced by the type of experience possessed and the amount of higher education obtained.

Taken as a whole, a higher proportion of the executives than the general public has college education. Police executives also have had more college than their subordinates. Executives

with college advanced faster than those without college education. Therefore, it is likely that the attainment of college education and speed of career advancement are related.

The length of previous experience in the executive's career field prior to entry into an executive position varies with the type and size of the unit in which the executive position is located. The smaller the unit over which the executive will preside the lower the previous experience of the executive attaining the position.

A higher proportion of the police executives in smaller police agencies than in large had police experience outside Alaska. Most of these executives originally came to Alaska as patrol officers.

The tenure length appears to vary roughly with the proportion of executives who enter the executive position of any agency laterally.

Correctional executives have had both substantial education and experience. Those executives with the most rapid career mobility tended to have completed college degree programs. In addition, particularly in recent years, executives with experience in the police sub-system have tended to receive a disproportionate amount of career advancement.

The characteristic of persistence in many of the executives studied was obvious. Position changes involving as many as 10 geographic changes in a 12 year period were made by at least two of the people studied. Many of the executives moved laterally several times without moving vertically once. They seemed dedicated to getting to the top.

While one can only speculate about the significance of the attitudes of the appointing officials concerning the reliability and trustworthiness of a candidate on the candidate's entry into an executive position, it is very clear that the reason most frequently influential in the decision to deny insiders promotional advancement up the career ladder is a lack of trust and confidence by the appointing authorities. This is a factor which merits more attention.

The career system which has actually been producing executives appears to be a systematic and rational system. It may have been as, or more effective in providing competent executives for Alaska's police and correctional agencies as the widely endorsed formal bureaucratic career ladders designs and procedures. The significance of this finding may lie in its implications for executive development programs and the approach which should be used by people who wish to achieve an executive position in a police or correctional agency. The findings of this study give support to a conclusion that additional research in this area should be undertaken.

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